

## TIME AND VILLAGE STRUCTURE IN NORTHERN UNYAMWEZI

### AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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#### INTRODUCTION

IN October 1974 I returned to the Kahama District of Tanzania for a further period of research in northern Unyamwezi where I had previously worked between late 1957 and early 1960.<sup>1</sup> The present paper arises from a consideration of the implications of two facts which impressed me strongly on this second visit. The first of these was that a substantial number of the homestead heads who had been my neighbours in the village of Butumwa for the larger part of my first fieldwork were still alive though some of them had moved to other parts of the District and beyond. The second was that those who had remained, along with many others from surrounding villages, had been moved as part of the Tanzanian Government's national resettlement programme into a new large nucleated village shortly before my return there.<sup>2</sup> These two facts have led me to pay further attention to the nature and functions of pre-1974 settlement patterns and to examine the relation between these and the form of the new scheme. One of the main points which will emerge from my discussion is the need, in trying to understand these settlement patterns, to take careful account of how villages change and develop over time as part of a complex combination of social and ecological processes. This processual aspect of village organization in the area has, I may add, not previously received sufficient attention in my own and other accounts of the situation there.<sup>3</sup>

The paper is divided into five parts. Following upon this introductory section, I present an account of changes which took place in the composition of Butumwa village between 1959 and 1974 as a result of in- and out-migration and of aging. Examples are given of the background history of cases of migration, and the age-distribution of household heads of this and neighbouring villages is contrasted with that found in more recently settled areas to the south. In a third section I present a more general model of the processes of village development, saturation and decline in the area and their relation to a range of factors including soil fertility, infant mortality, divorce and other features of the developmental cycle of domestic groups. This is followed by a discussion of the ways in which the normative structures of the village and the wider political system have provided an institutional framework which has been highly consistent with, and even encouraging to, the processes I have described. In the final section I examine the new post-1974 villages and consider some of the ways in which they constitute a quite radical departure from pre-1974 settlement patterns.

The main features of the social structural and cultural background to my discussion have been documented in some earlier publications (cf. Abrahams 1967a, 1967b) but a

few introductory remarks about the region and its population will be useful. Unyamwezi in west-central Tanzania is for the most part rolling country about 4000 feet above sea-level. The areas of higher ground on which the people live and do most of their cultivation are mainly characterised by fairly light soils of relatively poor quality. The lower ground, which tends to divide these areas and is beginning to be put to more agricultural use in some places, is characterised by thorn bush and becomes swampy during the rainy season. There is no overall shortage of land in the area—population density in the part of Kahama District under consideration appears to be about 55 per square mile these days—but local shortages do occur as I shall note.<sup>4</sup> The population of the area is ethnically mixed right down to the village level. In 1957, in the area which was then Busangi chiefdom within which Butumwa village lay, about half the population were Nyamwezi, a further quarter were Sukuma who are their closely related northern neighbours, and the majority of the remainder were Sumbwa from neighbouring areas to the west. Since then the Sukuma contingent has grown rather more rapidly than the rest of the population which has probably increased overall by about 50–60% since 1960. Most of the people are farmers combining agriculture with a variable amount of animal husbandry, and the former tendency to supplement farming with labour migration has decreased in recent years as fairly profitable forms of cash-cropping have been developed with Governmental help. The area was traditionally divided into chiefdoms, which varied considerably in size, and the chief was the head of a hierarchy of political offices, the lowest rung of which was occupied by village headmen. Chiefship was formally abolished as a political office in the early 1960s and a new authority structure created, but the pattern of territorial divisions itself was not radically changed. Pre-1974 villages varied in size according to the area of higher ground available for settlement and also over time as will be seen. Individual homesteads were built within a set of fields allocated to the homestead head who was typically a married male. Most homesteads contained a man, his wife or wives, and their children plus an occasional and varied sprinkling of kin of the head such as a divorced or widowed mother or sister, an unmarried younger brother, and perhaps some sister's children. The kinship system in the area is cognatic with important aspects of the filiation of children largely dependent upon the payment or non-payment of bridewealth (commonly 8–15 head of cattle or a cash equivalent). Children of non-bridewealth unions can, however, be redeemed at a later date by their father through special payments to the mother's kin. Marriage is not very stable. Few men still have their first wife by the time they reach the age of fifty and my figures suggest that, taken as a group, men over thirty have on average experienced about two divorces per head.

#### BUTUMWA 1959–74: PROCESSES OF SATURATION AND INCIPIENT DECLINE IN AN AGING VILLAGE

I turn now to a more detailed discussion of pre-1974 settlement patterns and the relevance of the 'longevity' of my former neighbours. I begin with data from Butumwa village itself and within this context I present, first, information which relates to 35 out of the 38 homestead heads who were living there in 1959. All 35 were married males and the other missing three consisted of 1) an old woman who was temporarily in charge of a homestead and is now dead, 2) a middle-aged Tusi who was

in many ways marginal to the community and is now dead, though his son is still about in the area, and 3) a middle-aged Sukuma who came about that time but left without trace shortly afterwards.

TABLE I: Butumwa Homestead Heads 1959

Age in 1959	<i>Below 30</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40 plus</i>
Number in 1959	6	2	27
Alive in 1974	6	2	17
Still in Butumwa in 1974	1 <sup>1</sup>	1	13
Died in Butumwa by 1974	—	—	7
Alive elsewhere in 1974	5	1	4
Died elsewhere by 1974	—	—	3

<sup>1</sup> This man was the RC catechist who worked for a nearby mission.

TABLE II: Further Analysis of Butumwa Homestead Heads who were 40 and over in 1959

Age in 1959	<i>a) 40-49</i>	<i>a b</i>	<i>b) 50-59</i>	<i>b c</i>	<i>c) 60 plus</i>
Number in 1959	5	8	9	3	2
Still in Butumwa in 1974 <sup>1</sup>	4	5	3	1	—
Died in Butumwa by 1974	—	1	3	2	1
Alive elsewhere in 1974	1	—	2	—	1
Died elsewhere by 1974	—	2	1	—	—

<sup>1</sup> The ages of these men by 1974 were: a) —, b) 2, c) 11.

Table I roughly divides the 35 according to their age in 1959 and tells us something of their subsequent history. Tables IIA and IIB provide more detailed information on the 40 plus age-group. I have divided their ages into 3 categories a) 40-49, b) 50-59, c) 60 plus, and I have assigned slightly uncertain marginal cases to a mixed category. One point which begins to emerge from these tables is that in 1974 Butumwa contained a substantially larger number of homestead heads who were clearly over sixty years of age compared with the situation in 1959. (See below for data on the overall relative stability of household numbers 1959-74). Another point is that although there seems to be no clear trend for members of particular age-divisions over forty in 1959 to have stayed or moved, the fact that five men moved who were in their fifties or just below in 1959 may perhaps be significant. I will return to this point briefly below.

Many of the 1959 homesteads heads had sons or other male dependents, such as younger brothers, who either had their own households then, within the same homestead, or acquired them as they grew up and married between 1959 and 1974. My information on such people is not as full as I would wish but the situation with regard to them appears to be as follows. Firstly, some, though I believe not very many, had already left the village before 1959. Secondly, of those there in 1959, twenty seem to have stayed on in the village and nineteen left. Nine of those who stayed already had their own households in 1959 as had five of those who subsequently left. In at least four cases, those who left took the homestead head *with them*, rather than vice-versa. It is in

this context that the migration of four of the five (a/b) and (b) cases in Table IIA which I noted above may be significant, since these were in fact the four cases in question and their moving reflects the needs and interests of their junior dependents at least as clearly as their own.

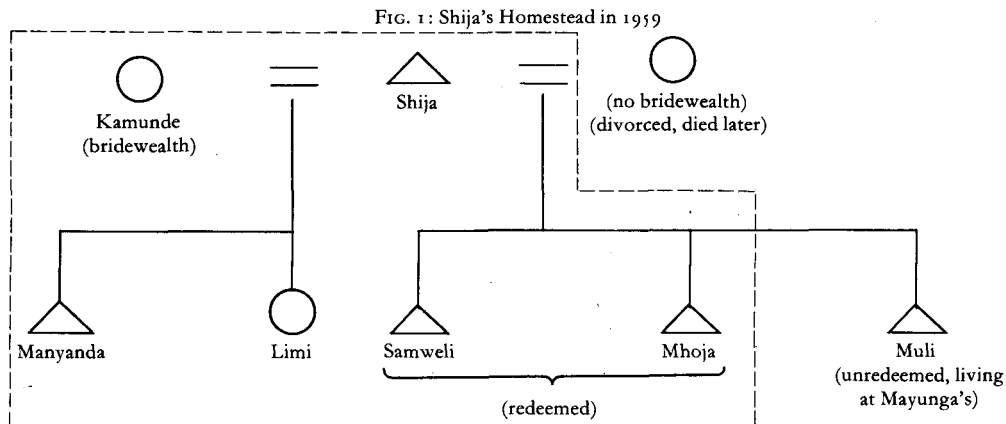
In addition to the homestead heads of 1959 and their dependents, there had also been eight newcomers to Butumwa between then and 1974. One of these was over 60 when he came to marry an old woman who was living in the village, and another lived there only temporarily while he held a job at the administrative headquarters a couple of miles away. Of the remaining six, four came with adult sons, though it is not fully clear who brought whom in these cases. One of them left fairly shortly afterwards with his sons, two others were eventually left behind by their sons who went on elsewhere, and the fourth, who came from a neighbouring village to take over the usufruct of his dead mother's brother's fields, was still there in 1974 with his son. The remaining two newcomers were still there in 1974. One was a younger man who came simply to a vacated plot, and the second, who was also relatively young, came to join his brother-in-law after his own father's death.

Butumwa village was first settled in the mid-1920s, and although the above material is not conclusive in itself, it does suggest that by 1974 the village had begun to reach a crucial stage in its development, and this view is supported by informants' statements and by case material. The village appears to have become what one might call a 'saturated' settlement which was beginning to experience significant out-migration. The number of households within it was, admittedly, fairly close to that of 1959, but it had been losing many of its younger members and there was now a substantially larger contingent of old men than there used to be. What would have happened to the village had it not been overtaken by the special events of 1974 is not absolutely certain but some clues are, I believe, provided by the decline of the neighbouring village of Kibama which was more or less empty by 1974. This village had been started earlier than had Butumwa, and it had a rather larger proportion than Butumwa of elderly homestead heads in 1959. Most of these had died by 1974. Few of them in fact had children, but in any case scarcely any of the younger members of the settlement in 1959 had stayed there and those who did seem to have had special reasons. Thus three of them had shops in the nearby shopping centre which served the local administrative headquarters and enjoyed a large passing trade.

Returning to Butumwa, the main reasons which people advanced to explain movement away from the village are similar to those discussed by Malcolm (1953: 47-50) in his report on the neighbouring and, of course, related Sukuma area. Witchcraft fears, relative land shortage—exacerbated now by the development of cash crops—and a related and perceived decline in soil fertility are among the central factors pushing people out, while knowledge and rumour about other places in which land is both more plentiful and fertile serve at the same time to attract people away. The following three cases which I have chosen from a number of possible examples furnish fairly typical illustrations of the sorts of processes involved. At the same time, they provide some interesting and useful hints about certain features of the situation which have not previously been well understood, and especially about the ways in which ecological adaptation and the exploitation of resources in the area appear to be tied in with such social structural factors as the developmental cycle in domestic groups.

*Case 1*

The first case concerns a man, Shija, his wife and some of his children. Shija was about 50 years old in 1959 and was married then to his present wife whom he married in the early 1940s. This wife was his sixth, and he has had 10 wives altogether. He has tried to establish polygynous households at various times by marrying this and later wives, but the others have simply fallen by the wayside since his present wife can be a rather difficult person. In 1959 Shija's homestead was as shown in Fig. 1.



None of the children were married although Samweli, the eldest, was in his late teens and was hoping to marry soon. By the time I returned in 1974, Shija had redeemed Muli who had been living with a matrilineal kinsman nearby, but both he (Muli) and Samweli had gone to live in another, more fertile part of Kahama District. Mhoja had established his own separate homestead not far from Shija, and Manyanda had married and had a household within Shija's homestead. Limi had also been married by that time.

Manyanda's and Limi's mother, Kamunde, is seen by local people as a key figure for the understanding of many of these events. Samweli, who had married in 1962 and has had several children, left in 1971 because his crops were not doing sufficiently well for his needs, but there was, it seems, also a feeling that Kamunde was in some way personally to blame for this. Shortly afterwards, Muli also left and went to join Samweli. Muli had, it seems, been redeemed with part of the bridewealth which Shija had received for Limi when she married, and this appears to have caused ill-feeling since the separate identity of different 'houses' in such multiple domestic structures tends to be jealously guarded not least by the wives and mothers concerned. Eventually Manyanda became ill and Kamunde is said to have accused Muli of causing this, telling him apparently that if her son Manyanda died, he (Muli) had better eat him. Shortly after this, Muli's house caught fire, and he then left to join Samweli.

*Case 2*

A second case concerns a former neighbour of Shija—a man called Mayunga who was also about fifty years of age in 1959. At that time his homestead had contained himself, his wife, and two of their three children. The third and eldest child was a girl who had already married and was living elsewhere with her husband. The two children at home

were a second daughter—temporarily estranged from her husband—and a son, Tabu, who was just about to marry. Also in the homestead was the young Muli—mentioned above in Shija's case—since Mayunga was a maternal relative of his and had been chosen as a suitable guardian for him until he should be redeemed. Sometime after I left, Mayunga's wife died and then in 1971 two of Tabu's young children died within a single week. These last two deaths were, I was told, ascribed to witchcraft arising from a quarrel which Tabu had had with a neighbour, and this finally pushed the group to move. Mayunga, whose eyesight had deteriorated seriously in the last few years to add to his troubles, followed his son Tabu rather than vice-versa. They moved to a place about 18 miles away called Masabi. In 1959 this had been a thinly populated though potentially fertile area. By 1974 it had become quite densely settled by Sukuma immigrants and others like Mayunga.

### *Case 3*

The third case concerns yet another neighbour of these men, a man called Maziku who had originally settled in Butumwa in the late 1950s conveniently near to Shija and his wife, Kamunde, who was in fact Maziku's sister. Maziku was away for much of the next few years as a migrant labourer, and returned to settle down in 1965. After two years, however, he left Butumwa and moved to a more fertile and less crowded area in the south of the District. Maziku's homestead in 1959 contained himself, a divorced sister, his mother, his wife, a teenage daughter and three young sons. He also had a second wife whom he was just about to bring to Butumwa from the area in which he previously had settled. Between 1959 and 1967 when he moved, Maziku seems to have experienced a deterioration of his economic situation in Butumwa. One reason for this was that the ratio of working hands to mouths in his homestead became worse as his mother died, his sister remarried and moved, and his daughter had a series of babies by men who did not marry her. These problems of domestic development were further aggravated, it seems, by the decreasing fertility of local soil and by some partially related changes in agriculture in the area. These consisted of the development of cotton cash-cropping and a probably related change-over from the production of bulrush millet to the production of maize. This last is a complicated issue which I cannot treat in detail here, but it seems clear that Maziku's fields were rather less well suited for maize than for millet production. It also seems clear, however, from other evidence, including that of Malcolm on Sukumaland and some of my own earlier collected material on population movement, that, important as they have no doubt been, these agricultural changes have, nonetheless, simply tended to accelerate rather than actually to generate the processes of village development and decline which appear to have been long intrinsic to the patterns of settlement in the area.

These cases, then, provide some illustration of the usual processes at work in people's movements from one locality to another. Before presenting a more general picture of these processes, however, I want to give some further information on the age structure of a somewhat wider area of which Butumwa was a part, and to compare this with the population of a much more recently settled locality in the south of the District together with a corrected version of the official 1967 Census of the District. My first set of figures were collected in a sample of 123 male plot-holders in the new village of Busangi which contained the populations of Butumwa and several other

nearby villages. Every married man was entitled to a plot, and my figures show that 31, or 25.2%, of my sample were 60 years of age or over.

Turning from these figures to those for Kahama District as a whole, one finds that according to the 1967 Census, 21.6% of the male population over 20 were counted as being over 60 years of age. Taking these figures at face value, the Busangi figures cannot be claimed to be very significantly different, but there seems in fact good reason not to do this. The official report on the Tanzanian Census (Volume V, p. 87) acknowledges the difficulties of assessing age accurately in national census-taking conditions, and it goes on to note that this Census appears to have suffered from distortion as a result of these difficulties. The Census Report adds that the distortion in question is likely to be similar to that described in a United Nations document on the problem, according to which there is a strong tendency in such censuses to exaggerate the age of male respondents so that probably 75% of men in any five-year age group over 60 should be placed in the next lower five-year group (Unesco 1968: 7). If this correction is made for the Kahama figures, the relevant proportion is 17.9%, and the Busangi figures appear fairly significantly different with a comparison of the numbers involved yielding a  $\chi$ -square figure of 4.48 with one degree of freedom. It should perhaps be added that my own data from Busangi seem much less likely to need such correction since they were collected jointly and rather carefully by myself and my field assistant who has a detailed knowledge of local micro-history and of a considerable number of those interviewed.

However this may be, the figures are by any account in strong contrast with those which I collected in the village of Kisuke in a fertile and relatively recently settled area in the south of the District. There, in a sample of 54 household heads, I found only one man over 60 years of age, despite the fact that there might well be more tendency for me to over-age respondents in a settlement where the inhabitants were not well known to me or my assistant. My figures for this settlement differ sharply from the District Census data and, of course, in the opposite direction from that of the Busangi figures. Even if one includes two senile men living as dependents, one obtains a minimum  $\chi$ -square of 6, with one degree of freedom, against the corrected Kahama figures and this becomes a maximum of 12.4 if one does not count these two men and makes the contrast with the uncorrected Census data. In either case, the discrepancy between the Busangi and Kisuke figures is a clear one.

Such variation between the age structures of different local communities is of some interest. Firstly I know of no strictly comparable and reliable report of local Tanzanian or other African age distributions which arise 'statistically' as these do, rather than as a direct result of jural rules, as in traditional Nyakyusa society (cf. Wilson 1951) where a partially comparable situation appears to have been institutionalised. In addition there is a considerable probability that such differences form a regular feature of the population distribution of this and possibly other parts of Tanzania, and they appear to be symptomatic of the sorts of processes which have been taking place within domestic groups and villages there and which are implicit in my data from Butumwa. Taken together, such material strongly suggests that relatively large areas of Unyamwezi, which can all too easily be seen as aggregates of many individual and similar self-perpetuating villages, need in fact to be conceived as single and 'organically structured' ecological and sociological zones. I may add that the

tendency of such villages to persist for relatively long periods of time seems particularly likely to lead one to miss the full weight of this point in one's perception of the situation.

#### NYAMWEZI VILLAGES AS PROCESSUAL PHENOMENA

Having presented and commented upon a variety of numerical and other data, I want now to construct a more coherent picture of the form and implications of the processes of village and domestic group development which appear to have been intrinsic to pre-1974 settlements. Up to that time, Nyamwezi villages were, I suggest, processual phenomena in a number of important ways.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, they tended to pass through a process in which their size and structure, and especially in this context their age structure, were changing over a number of decades. This process may be characterised as one of growth, saturation and decline and it seems likely, *ceteris paribus*, to culminate in an old village with a relatively old population, though the process does not simply correspond with the life-cycle of the oldest members of the village. This last point is related to a second way in which such villages were typically changing over time, that is through change in their actual personnel as a result of births and deaths and of the cumulative in- and out-migration of individuals and domestic groups.

These tendencies to change of size and structure and of personnel in villages appear to have been intimately related to a further range of factors and processes which are themselves interestingly consistent with each other. One such factor is that of environment and ecological adjustment to it, and one of its main features is the fact that, at least under customary techniques and patterns of land usage, Nyamwezi soils gradually become worn out. My understanding is that the deterioration of such soils is likely to take place simply through regular use with these techniques, but it seems clear that the process has, as I have mentioned, been somewhat exacerbated in recent years by an increase in cash-cropping and an accompanying decrease in labour migration. In addition, and more generally, it may be noted that the process seems likely to have involved its own intrinsic phases of acceleration inasmuch as demands on a village's cultivable land are in any case likely to increase in intensity, at a rate varying with that of population growth, during a considerable period of its history as the number and the size of its constituent households expands.

This last point draws attention to a further major factor in the situation, namely the developmental cycle of family and domestic groups. The overall legal and social status of these groups as component elements in the village communities under consideration is itself of some significance as I will try to show in a later stage of my discussion, but there are some features of their internal structure and development which I wish to bring out at this juncture. Firstly we may note that the period or phase which Fortes (1958) has characterised as that of the 'expansion' of domestic groups seems to be doubly geared in this area to the encouragement of population movement. On the one hand, if the process of expansion is successful, the increase in the number of young mouths to be fed will tend to place an extra strain both upon the land of the group, as I have mentioned, and also, of course, on its labour, and such strain is likely to push people to seek more productive land elsewhere, particularly in the later history of a village. On the other hand, any failure in the expansion process through infant mortality is liable to generate fears and conflicts about witchcraft which also tend to



push people away to new settlements. This fits well with the more general point, whose micro-political relevance has been stressed more often perhaps than its economic significance, that not only is the incidence of witchcraft accusations to some extent structured by the relationships between accuser, victim and accused, but also the points in an individual's life-cycle and the development of his or her domestic or other groups may play a part in structuring the occurrence of such accusations.

A second relevant feature of the development of domestic groups is the high divorce rate in the area. This not only affects the residence of spouses inasmuch as a divorced wife commonly goes to live with kinsfolk in another village—and indeed a large proportion of marriages take place between members of different though not always very distant villages—but it also seems to have less obvious, though no less serious repercussions on relations between fathers and their sons. As my field assistant very shrewdly observed, it is quite unusual to find an adult son still living with his father in one homestead if his mother has been divorced. It would probably go beyond the limits of my fieldwork data to demonstrate this point statistically, but my material does bear out this observation and the information presented earlier about Shija and his sons brings out just some of the many factors which may conspire to make such co-residence difficult. In addition, it may be noted that it is not at all uncommon for a man to look after his divorced or widowed mother if she has not remarried, for example, in old age, although this in turn may lead to difficulties, including the possibility of his divorce if his mother and his wife fail to get on well together.

#### THE ROLE OF THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AND WIDER TERRITORIAL ORGANISATIONS

The various ecological and developmental factors outlined above have, I suggest, regularly combined to drive, or at least tempt, young and middle aged men to move away from their paternal or other village in which they are living, and the attraction of other and if possible more fertile parts of the country seems to have been at its strongest for them at the junctures I have described. I want now to complement this discussion of such 'statistical' processes with an examination of some more qualitative and positively normative features of pre-1974 village organization which are interestingly consistent with, and to a varying extent reinforcing of, the processes in question. As I have described elsewhere (cf. Abrahams 1965, 1967a, 1970), such villages were not kinship units but were rather communities of people united by ties of neighbourhood co-operation and responsibility on the one hand and by their joint subordination to territorial authorities on the other. Taking this last point first, it is clear that an important function of the chiefdom system, and of the administrative system which succeeded it in the early 1960s, was the provision of a stable and widely distributed territorial framework of law, order and public service within which substantial population movement could quite readily take place, and it may be noted that the rules of land tenure were highly consonant with this. In the chiefdom system land was said to belong to the chief and its allocation was administered for him by the village headman. Newcomers were typically welcome at both chiefdom and village level, and they either received an allocation of existing fields in the light of their needs or they were given permission, in new settlements, to clear land. Fields left behind by people who moved reverted to the headman for redistribution. Claims to inherit fields

were often treated sympathetically but it was stressed that there was no automatic right to inherit land and the chiefs and headmen reserved the right to lay down all sorts of conditions about the way in which a particular holding might be inherited. In short, the chiefdom system of land tenure provided considerable security of individual land use to the commoners who formed the large majority of any chiefdom's population but it denied them any clear-cut rights to pass on holdings to their heirs. This discouragement of the establishment of anything approximating to commoner land-holding kinship corporations was, moreover, substantially maintained in the new administrative structures which replaced the chiefdoms since the new territorial authorities more or less took over the legal, though not the ritual, powers and functions of the chiefs and their subordinates in this regard.

Turning now to neighbourhood relations, the point which needs to be stressed here is that these are conceived by the people themselves as based upon the type of mutual obligation which Sahlins (1965) has termed 'balanced reciprocity'. As I have described elsewhere (cf. Abrahams 1965), people characterise ties of neighbourhood by reference to a notion of 'debt' which they see as seriously different from the obligations which exist between kinsfolk. Kin should help each other when and how they can. Neighbours in contrast have an obligation to try to give exact return for what they have received, e.g. help in threshing, and there is also a temporal aspect to this to which I have paid insufficient attention in my earlier work. This temporal dimension is brought out well in a paper by Mapolu (1973). Examining the various local cultivation groups which are found among the Sukuma and in many parts of Unyamwezi, Mapolu emphasises how the set of neighbours who typically constitute such a group always co-operate on a season-by-season basis. These groups cultivate the fields of individual members for a small fee or subscription and they cultivate for non-group members for a larger fee. At the year's end, takings are pooled and used to buy meat and drink for a feast. Normally no balance is carried forward to the next year when a similar group, not necessarily with exactly the same membership, has to be reconstituted from scratch. Mapolu's interests in and conclusions from this data are only partially coincident with my own here, but it is clear that the point about the temporary nature of these groups which he highlights fits well with my general argument.<sup>6</sup> Emphasis upon exact return and short-term reciprocity is typical of Nyamwezi neighbourhood relations, and it may be worthwhile to point out explicitly in this context that these features of neighbourhood ties have been to some extent protected by tendencies to village 'exogamy' mentioned earlier, which help to prevent the widespread development of kinship ties and concomitant longer term commitments between neighbours.

This discussion of the complementary influence of neighbourhood and chiefdom organization brings my account of pre-1974 villages themselves to a close. Essentially, I have tried to indicate how these communities were in a variety of interlocking ways both temporal and relatively temporary units. I have pointed out that a range of factors, both sociological and ecological, have combined to generate and foster the processes analysed, and it is perhaps worthwhile to note explicitly that several of these factors stem from wider (e.g. chiefdom) and narrower (e.g. household) fields of social organization than that of the village itself. It may also be noted here that such villages contrast systematically and fundamentally with the more or less permanent and closed

villages of parts of south Asia and Madagascar (cf. Leach 1961 and Bloch 1971) in which there is, at least ideally, an everlasting link between a delimited area of land and a community which exhibits many if not all the features of Maine's classical 'corporation aggregate'. It is not surprising in this context that one of my informants told me he was not so much worried about the idea of joining one of the *ujamaa* (socialist collective) villages which had been started in the area after Independence as he was about the question of how easily he might be able to get out of one once he had joined it.

#### THE 1974 VILLAGISATION PROGRAMME AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

As I mentioned earlier, I returned to the Kahama area to find my former neighbours living in a newly established and relatively large nucleated village which had been created as part of a national villagisation programme. Since the people had been moved into the village only about three months prior to my arrival, it is clearly difficult from my data to assess the nature of the programme and the viability of the new settlements in any authoritative way. The new villages do, however, represent at least potentially such a marked change, and to some extent deliberately so, from the pattern I have been analysing that it seems worthwhile in the last part of this paper to highlight some of their main features and their possible implications.

Early in 1974, the Tanzanian Parliament ratified a resolution of the TANU Party's National Executive Committee that everyone in the rural areas of the country should wherever feasible have moved into new nucleated villages by 1976 and that as many as possible should in fact move into such villages in and around June 1974. This decision was taken partially as a result of dissatisfaction with the progress of the implementation of earlier policies designed to persuade individuals and groups to make such moves voluntarily as a first step in what President Nyerere had foreseen as a two stage move towards the ultimate reorganization of the rural population into nucleated *ujamaa* collective villages (cf. Nyerere 1967: 22). Some notion of the progress of this policy of voluntary movement and reorganization in Kahama District can be obtained from the fact that in August 1973 there were 31 *ujamaa* villages in the District with a total population of 2215 men, women and children. This represents an average of about 71 persons per village and constitutes about 14% of the total population of the District.

A point which should perhaps be clarified about the new programme is that it has not been aimed specifically at the enforced collectivisation of the population into *ujamaa* villages in the full sense of that term. At least initially, the aim of the policy has, rather, simply been the establishment of permanent and relatively large nucleated settlements which, it is hoped, will have certain advantages over existing forms of settlement. On the one hand, it is envisaged that such settlements can more easily be provided with good social services, which are expected to include piped water supplies, better schooling, and good health service facilities. On the other hand, it is also expected that the new communities will be agriculturally more productive than their predecessors. In the village of Busangi where I stayed, people were still having to cultivate their former fields during the first season, but once the necessary arrangements have been made, block-farms will be established near the village, as has happened elsewhere, and it is hoped that these will be more amenable to agricultural improvements through the use of fertilisers, pesticides, and—where possible—

tractors. Individuals will be allocated holdings on these farms, while within the village each married couple has been allocated a one-acre plot on which to build their home and grow part of their food supplies. Such plots are for the most part arranged in groups of ten (five by two), in accordance with the 'ten house party cell' system, and these are separated by wide 'streets' which are to be kept clear of weeds. It is expected that each plot-holder will, in due course, build a relatively permanent house, from concrete building blocks and with an iron roof for example, in contrast to the more usual mud-brick or mud and wattle, grass-thatched huts which, in close keeping with what I have already described, normally last for only 10 to 15 years. There has been considerable discussion about the optimum number of plots which a village should obtain and it seems clear that some experimentation will be necessary. Five hundred plots and associated households was a figure commonly cited as ideal, but there were rather more than this in the two villages I visited.

The viability of these new communities is hard to assess at this early stage. A range of relatively short-term factors, including the success or failure of Government to provide the health and social services envisaged, and also the early results of the agricultural experiments involved, is clearly likely to affect the situation in important ways. The main point I wish to bring out here, however, is that, if one allows for a successful outcome to these short term issues, it becomes apparent that a number of longer term problems will also have to be resolved, at least in the Nyamwezi area and comparable regions. The nature of these problems will, I hope, have begun to emerge from the preceding analysis since they stem from fundamental differences between the new communities and the patterns which I have delineated. The main ecological problem will undoubtedly be that of maintaining the long-term fertility of the soils within and surrounding the new villages, and if this can be achieved at a price which community and state can afford, then serious social structural issues are likely to need resolution. On the one hand, it is by no means easy to see how the new structures will in fact be flexible enough to absorb growing populations and the demands of domestic developmental processes either within or between themselves. For there is clearly going to be a maximum viable size for such communities beyond which it becomes difficult to provide sufficient nearby land and adequate services, while at the same time there is also going to be a minimum viable size of village for which the necessary services and facilities can sensibly be provided, and the gradual development of such communities from small settlements of pioneers will thus run hard against the new policy. On the other hand, if the villages do in fact manage to become established as relatively permanent communities with a substantially slower or at least more staggered rate of population movement than existed up to 1974, it appears likely that they will be faced with the consequences of many conflicts, arising out of divorce, polygyny and infant mortality, for example, which are often expressed in terms of witchcraft and which in the past have tended to be resolved through the highly valued possibility of relatively unrestricted movement to another area. In these and related respects, we may thus expect to find that the present social system will be subjected to and will at the same time generate considerable stress in this new bounded environment.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork was carried out in Kahama District from October 1974 to March 1975. I am very grateful to the Tanzanian Government and the University of Dar es Salaam for research clearance and other help during the period, and to the Social Science Research Council and the University of Cambridge through its Travel Fund and the Smuts Memorial Fund for financial support.

<sup>2</sup> The Government's resettlement plans have a long history (cf. Nyerere 1967), but the programme for 1974 was unprecedentedly intensive as I go on to describe.

<sup>3</sup> Comparable phenomena have of course been recognised in other parts of East Africa by writers such as Middleton (1960) on the Lugbara, Richards (1966) on the Ganda, and Rigby (1969) on the Gogo. More generally, the work of Fortes (e.g. 1949, 1958) has, of course, been of seminal importance in the field of processual studies, and its influence on the ideas in this paper will be apparent from the title onwards.

<sup>4</sup> Estimated population density for the same area in 1957 was 23 per square mile. In interpreting such figures for population density and growth, however, it is necessary to remember that the whole Nyamwezi and Sukuma region is one, as this paper partially illustrates, in which expansion into new or sparsely populated areas of settlement has been a regularly recurring process which seems likely to continue for some time albeit in a modified form.

<sup>5</sup> I am essentially dealing here with twentieth

century villages, though I consider that the roots of the processes which I describe are not confined to that period. In the nineteenth century, other factors and especially military ones seriously affected settlement patterns in much of the area and large compact defensive villages were common there as elsewhere during that time. The almost universal abandonment of this form of settlement once peace was established, however, is I believe significant of the influence of the forces which I go on to discuss here.

<sup>6</sup> Mapolu discusses these issues in the context of an argument as to whether socialist communities can be established in the area using existing forms of neighbourly co-operation as a foundation. He argues that the short-term nature of such co-operation makes it an unsuitable base on which to build and that totally new forms must therefore be created. Mapolu's discussion of this question and his use of comparative Russian material is interestingly reminiscent of Marx's (1881) correspondence with Zasulich about the possibilities of building communism on the base of Russian communities organised along the lines of the 'Germanic mode of production' which has much of interest in common with the Nyamwezi situation. More generally, the short-term nature of 'balanced reciprocity' has of course been stressed by Sahlins himself (1965) and has been treated interestingly in the present context by Bloch (1973).

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### Résumé

#### CADRE TEMPOREL ET STRUCTURE DES VILLAGES DANS L'UNYAMWEZI DU NORD

Le présent article a été rédigé à l'issue d'une seconde visite effectuée dans l'Unyamwezi du nord en 1974, peu après le transfert d'une proportion importante de la population dans des villages nucléés de grande taille nouvellement construits. L'article est divisé en cinq parties. Après une discussion préliminaire, on indique les changements qui avaient eu lieu, avant le processus de réinstallation, dans la composition d'un village Butumwa entre 1959 et 1974, et qui découlaient d'une migration dans les deux sens ainsi que du vieillissement des individus. On présente certains cas de migration et l'on met en contraste la répartition selon l'âge des chefs de famille avec celle que l'on trouve dans des implantations méridionales plus récentes. La troisième partie offre un schéma plus général des processus de développement des villages avant 1974, de leur saturation et de leur dépérissement ainsi que de leurs rapports avec certains facteurs tels la fertilité du sol, la mortalité infantile, le divorce et autres traits du cycle de développement des groupes familiaux. Vient ensuite une analyse du rôle des structures normatives du village et du système politique en général dans la mise en place d'un cadre institutionnel favorisant les processus décrits plus haut. Dans la dernière partie, on examine les nouveaux villages postérieurs à 1974 et la divergence radicale qu'ils présentent par rapport aux modes d'implantation antérieurs. L'article souligne la nécessité, dans tout effort de compréhension de l'implantation dans cette région, de tenir compte du mode de développement des villages dans le temps, développement qui s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une combinaison complexe de processus sociaux et idéologiques.